

THE MOUSE WHO WOULD RULE THE WORLD! HOW AMERICAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFLECTS THE THEMES OF DISNEYIZATION*

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper specifies the relationships between the trend of Disneyization and the increasingly efficient, scientific, costly, and control-oriented systems of American criminal justice. Disneyization is the process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world. It is related to the concurrent phenomenon of McDonalidization, which has been more widely written about and even applied to criminal justice. This paper discusses the trend of Disneyization and then illustrates how the main elements of Disneyization (theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labor) typify American criminal justice activity. Much of the paper is concerned with media coverage of crime and criminal justice, given the intimate relationship between it and criminal justice system processes.

INTRODUCTION

Social scientists often predict future societal trends and document past and current trends, including criminogenic trends. From these analyses, factors such as poverty, unemployment and underemployment, income inequality and transfer of wealth, real wage declines, and corporate downsizing are noted as important for understanding criminality (Feagin, 2001). Rarely do criminologists and criminal justice scholars focus on the effects of larger trends that are encouraged by America's capitalistic culture. Two examples are the related trends of McDonalidization and Disneyization, both of which are part of America's growing dominance over the rest of the world, what scholars call "globalization" or the "global culture of consumption" (Waters, 2002).

America's growing dominance over the rest of the world (or at least the parts we want most control over) is being led by large corporations such as McDonalds and Disney, each of which is backed by the full support of the U.S. government. Evidence of this is the spread of

McDonalds restaurants all over the globe and the emergence of Disney theme parks in several countries, as well as mainstream media outlets owned by Disney (i.e., ABC, ESPN). The potential result is that no matter where one travels, he or she will still be there, because everywhere will be the same. Waters (2002: 215) suggests the possibility of “a homogenized common culture of consumption.” This means that as all societal institutions become McDonaldized and Disneyized, it will increasingly difficult to differentiate one place from another and fewer unique places will exist.

Using numerous computerized search engines and databases, I found only one previous piece of scholarship dealing with McDonaldization and criminal justice, and not one concerning Disneyization and criminal justice. In his article, “Three Strikes as a Public Policy: The Convergence of the New Penology and the McDonaldization of Punishment,” Shichor (1997) demonstrates how the metaphors of getting “tough on crime” and fighting a “war on drugs” have led to penal policies based exclusively on deterrence and incapacitation, as well as longer prison sentences, a rapid growth in the prison population, and prison overcrowding. Shichor compares the use of the three-strikes law in California to McDonaldization, *“the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world”* (Ritzer, 2000: 1, emphasis in original). Three-strikes laws, now in place in over half of the states in America, were meant to increase efficiency of the criminal justice process, were to be based on scientific prediction of dangerousness, and were to protect citizens through a cost-efficient mechanism (Zimring, Hawkins, and Kamin, 2001).

Shichor illustrates how the opposite of what was expected with three-strikes laws has occurred, at least in California. Huge amounts of money are being spent in the application of the state’s three-strikes law on relatively minor offenders, courts are backlogged with additional trials, and correctional facilities are overpopulated. More recent research on this law shows how it is being used disproportionately against relatively minor offenders and against racial minorities (Zimring et al., 2001). Similar to the fast food industry, “rationalized” methods of delivering products have produced irrational results (Schlosser, 2001); we end up getting the opposite of what we are promised. This is the core argument underlying McDonaldization as a social process. Criminal justice policies may be thought of as irrational when their benefits in terms of reducing crime are outweighed by the harms they cause. By most accounts, three-strikes laws meet this definition of irrational (Robinson, 2002a).

Another essay was recently published that assesses the degree to which all aspects of America’s criminal justice systems have become McDonaldized (Robinson, 2002b). This essay builds upon that paper by analyzing relationships between criminal justice practice in the United States and the trend of Disneyization. Throughout, I illustrate how Disneyization of American criminal justice can be seen in irrational criminal justice policies. As noted earlier, irrational criminal justice policies are ones that have questionable efficacy in reducing crime and/or that do more harm than good, such as interfering with the delivery of social justice (Robinson, 2002a). To date, there has not been a single piece of scholarship published with addresses how this trend affects the practice of criminal justice in the United States.

WHAT IS DISNEYIZATION? AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO MCDONALDIZATION

Disneyization is a term coined by Bryman (1999a: 26), which refers to “the process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.” This term was posited in Bryman’s article, “The Disneyization of Society.” Bryman relates this process to McDonaldization and says it really parallels it quite nicely. McDonaldization is made up of four elements, including efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through nonhuman technology. These are understood as follows:

- *Efficiency* refers to “the optimum method for getting from one point to another” or for achieving some goal (Ritzer, 2000: 12). In the fast food industry, efficiency is imperative, as the term “fast” implies;
- *Calculability* is “an emphasis on the quantitative aspects of products sold ... and services offered ... In McDonaldized systems, quantity has become equivalent to quality; a lot of something, or the quick delivery of it, means it must be good” (Ritzer, 2000: 12). In the fast food industry, more for your money is better than less for your money;
- *Predictability* refers to “the assurance that products and services will be the same over time and in all locales (Ritzer, 2000: 13). In the fast food industry, the goal is to make one’s entire dining experience completely consistent with all previous visits; no matter where you go, the product will be exactly the same;
- *Control*, the final element of McDonaldization, means that as many aspects of production and consumption are governed by strict rules and an emphasis on a single way of doing things. In the fast food industry, control is often achieved through the use of nonhuman technology (Ritzer, 2000: 236).

Any system or institution that stresses efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control could be described as McDonaldized. Ritzer’s main claim is that the incredible success of the fast food industry has promoted copy cats in numerous other systems and institutions, including hotel chains, shopping malls, oil change and auto repair businesses, and so on. My recent paper (Robinson, 2002a) illustrates how the ideal goals of America’s systems of police, courts, and corrections have become subjugated by the real demands placed on them by our McDonaldized fast food nation. In this paper, I show how police, courts, and corrections have increasingly begun to operate in accordance with the goals of efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control, sometimes even at the cost of interfering with justice and not effectively reducing crime.

The existence of *Disneyization* implies that the famous entertainment giant, with its enduring symbol of the Mouse (i.e., Mickey), has gained so much power and influence over our culture that it is worthy of separate attention. Like McDonaldization, there are four main elements of Disneyization, including theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labor. These terms can be understood as follows:

- *Theming* is the packaging of images to attract people and sell products. Although Disney did not invent theming, it certainly popularized its use. Disney, after all, does operate the nation’s most popular *theme* parks;
- *Dedifferentiation of consumption* denotes “the general trend whereby the forms of consumption associated with different institutional spheres become interlocked with each

other and increasingly difficult to distinguish” (Bryman, 1999a: 33). In the theme park industry, this term refers to the inability of park visitors to realize that the corporate goal is to inspire visitors to spend as much money as possible in its shops and restaurants;

- *Merchandising* is “the promotion of goods in the form of or bearing copyright images and logos” (Bryman, 1999a: 36). Disney, of course, has licensed and sold its images on just about everything. It now operates its own stores outside of its parks, located in many malls. Schlosser (2001: 40) calls Disney’s marketing strategies “synergy,” which refers to the corporation’s efforts to sell its products by using other institutions such as the fast food industry;
- *Emotional labor*, the final element of Disneyization, is the use of coercion to force employees to behave in a given way. In the case of Disney, there is a mandated image and set of behaviors for employees, one of cleanliness, friendliness, and helpfulness.

Like McDonaldization, Disneyization also relies on control. For example, millions of people visit Disney World and have a good time without concern for criminal victimization. Little street crime occurs at Disney’s theme parks, other than theft, which makes it easier for people to enjoy themselves. It is the controlled environment to which the low crime rates are attributed (Shearing and Stenning, 1997). The controlled environment also makes it easier to control people’s behavior. For example, Disney uses fountains and flower gardens as physical barriers to limit the choices people can make about where to walk. Visitors are given constant instructions in order to decrease the probability of confusion and trouble-making behavior. Guests are also constantly under surveillance by employees. According to Shearing and Stenning (1997), the control at Disney’s theme parks is subtle but no less orchestrated. It is specifically designed to prevent problem behavior.

Any system or institution that is characterized by theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labor could be described as Disneyized. Given that the two trends discussed above are so similar and that our systems of police, courts, and corrections reflect McDonaldization, it is likely that they also reflect Disneyization. It is increasingly difficult to differentiate McDonaldization and Disneyization as social trends, now that the McDonalds restaurant chain has partnered up with Disney to sell hamburgers and movies through its commercials: each has the same goal of maintaining and promoting a certain image to sell its products. Bryman (1999a: 42) writes: “Many institutions may be described as *both* McDonaldized and Disneyized,” and thus McDisneyized (Ritzer and Liska, 1997; Bryman, 1999b). Some “institutions may be McDonaldized but not Disneyized or Disneyized but not McDonaldized or may even be Disneyized in some respects and McDonaldized in others.” My previous research demonstrates that America’s criminal justice systems have been McDonaldized. Yet, no previous published research has discussed relationships between criminal justice system practice and Disneyization, although American criminal justice practice does reflect Disneyization in several ways. The remainder of the article assesses the parallels between the trend of Disneyization and American criminal justice processes. Much of the paper is concerned with media coverage of crime and criminal justice, given the intimate relationship between it and criminal justice system processes.

DISNEYIZATION IN AMERICAN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The evidence reviewed in the rest of the article suggests our systems of justice have been affected by the elements of Disneyization, including theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labor. In the sections that follow, I show how crime and criminal justice have become themed (theming), how this tricks consumers into buying more criminal justice (dedifferentiation of consumption), and ultimately, how this allows certain interests to make money off of crime and criminal justice (merchandising). Finally, I examine the issue of emotional labor in criminal justice.

Theming

The most significant example of theming in American criminal justice actually concerns processes that occur outside of the justice system, processes that emanate from the media. I include it here because many scholars now see the intimate connections between media institutions and agencies of criminal justice (e.g., Kappeler, Blumberg, and Potter, 2000; Merlo and Benekos, 2000; Potter and Kappeler, 1998; Robinson, 2002a; Surette, 1998). For example, Robinson (2002a) puts forth a model of myth-making and documents the sources of injustice in the criminal justice system. Based on the research showing that America's criminal justice systems of police, courts, and corrections are most focused on the same types of crimes that are broadcast in the mainstream media and that police, courts, and corrections are highly affected by media coverage of crime and criminal justice, Robinson argues that one must consider the media when assessing criminal justice processes. It turns out that media packaging of images of crime and criminal justice are *the* major source of theming in American criminal justice (Kappeler et al., 2000).

Media is an umbrella term for a wide range of sources of news-related information and the *mass media* are "media that are easily, inexpensively, and simultaneously accessible to large segments of a population" (Surette, 1992: 10). These sources include newspapers, magazines, books, television, radio, film, and recordings that are organized within a hierarchy of controlling institutions. The inner ring of the media (Hess, 1981) consists of the major news media outlets such as ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, major news magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, national papers such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, and the Associated Press (AP) wire service. These are called the inner ring sources because they are main sources of information for Americans about many issues and problems (Marion, 1995). Obviously, crime is a major issue and problem in society; hence it is usually news (Merlo and Benekos, 2000).

Sources of inner ring media have greater influence than other sources of media. Once they create a theme that pertains to crime or criminal justice, it will be broadcast all over the nation (Surette, 1998): "The organization at the top of the media hierarchy decides what counts as news" (Harrigan, 2000: 120). This is true because most journalists consult these sources for their own news and reporters of crime news commonly copy what other media reporters are doing (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1992). Logically, when reputable sources cover crime problems in the media, other reporters will take their lead and follow with their own stories that are very similar in nature.

American corporations, through the inner ring of media outlets they own and control, define problems and identify crises and thereby determine the issues that will be brought to the attention of political leaders and American citizens (Harrigan, 2000). Ben Bagdikian's (2000) book, The Media Monopoly, chronicles the ever-growing stranglehold that major corporations have on America's news. Research shows that the mainstream media are owned by a handful of corporations (Graber, 1996; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Kappeler et al., 2000; Parenti, 1993). As I mentioned earlier, the Disney Corporation now owns ABC News and the ESPN networks.

The main effects of the media on people include altering their perceptions of the criminal justice system (Van Horn, Baumley, and Gormley, 1992) and distorting facts about crime (Marion, 1995). In terms of crime, violent crimes are over-represented in the media (Surette, 1998), especially the "most terrifying crimes" and those committed by strangers (Scheingold, 1984: 55) on the streets (Kooistra, Mahoney, and Westervelt, 1999). This was true during most of the 20th Century, with periodic breaks for coverage of more pressing issues such as economic recessions, war, or specific crime types such as drug war turf battles, school shootings, terrorism, or juvenile crime waves. Studies show that violence, including homicide, is covered on prime time television at a rate hundreds to one thousand times its actual occurrence (e.g., see Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman, 1994).

At the same time, corporate crime and white-collar crime are downplayed or ignored (Parenti, 1993:10; Steel and Seger, 1988:77). Occasionally, such acts are discussed in the media, including recent cases such as the Enron and WorldCom financial scandals and the Ford/Firestone fiasco. Of primary interest to the media are the rarest and most egregious examples of crime, which may explain why these cases were covered in the first place; coverage of these cases suggested to the viewer that these cases are atypical in American business even though they are not. Television news generally shows violence at a rate much higher than its incidence in society would seem to justify (Newman, 1990). As noted by Krajicek (1998:4): "Murder and sexual offenses are the marquee offenses ... and certain cases, generally based upon their notoriety or celebrity, are anointed for extravagant coverage." Even among murders, it is the most heinous and bizarre of all murders that tend to be most widely discussed in the media (e.g., see Paulsen, 2000).

Krajicek (1998: 180), a former crime reporter, describes crime news: "Take a predisposition toward simplicity and anecdote, add unsophisticated reporting, a degenerating peer culture, an overworked news staff, the rapture of sex and celebrities, and – poof! – you've got today's crime journalism." His analysis suggests that the media:

- Provide crime-anxious Americans with excited accounts of horrible crimes;
- Present tenuous evidence that the crimes, however anomalous, could happen to each of us;
- Seek out accountable individuals, judges, probation officers, and devised snappy slogans to neatly package the problem; and
- Serve up images of scowling politicians and their podiums thumping about the latest legislation that surely would stop such atrocities ... "We're finally getting tough on crime. We're no longer coddling criminals. We're making America's streets safe again."

This type of coverage follows the established *themes* about crime and criminal justice that have been promulgated over the past few decades as the country's as the country's justice systems

have gotten bigger, tougher, and more costly.

By focusing on certain types of crimes over others, the media are thus involved in “constructing” the typical view of crime, even when they are only reporting “extreme, dramatic cases: the public is more likely to think they are representative because of the emphasis by the media” (Chermak, 1995: 580). Potter and Kappeler (1998: 7) explain: “Media coverage directs people’s attention to specific crimes and helps to shape those crimes as social problems.” This results in Americans being much more concerned with violent crimes such as murder, even though they are much more likely to be victimized by property crimes such as theft and burglary. This is a clear example of theming because the crime theme is generated by big business with a clear goal of selling products. In fact, Americans end up willing to buy even more of the same – more police, more death penalty, longer sentences, and so forth (Robinson, 2002b).

When the media ignore harmful acts committed by the wealthy, such as white-collar crime (Potter and Kappeler, 1998; Surette, 1998) and corporate crime (Evans and Lundman, 1987; Randall, 1995), it is troubling for one major reason: the harms associated with such acts clearly dwarf all street crimes combined in any given year. Neglect of this topic stems from the risk of libel suits, interrelationships between media and business, a pro-business orientation in the media, and difficulties associated with investigating white-collar crime (Potter and Kappeler, 1998: 15). The bottom line appears to be that any story that might interfere with the bottom line of corporate America, such as continuous, hard-hitting series of reports about a corporation’s willingness to kill people for money, will not be tolerated because it would call into question the credibility of unfettered capitalism as currently practiced in the United States.

In terms of how the media cover criminal justice, the early steps in the criminal justice process (such as investigation and arrest by law enforcement) are emphasized, and the later steps (such as plea bargaining, sentencing, and punishment) are ignored (Potter and Kappeler, 1998). Most real criminal justice cases receive no coverage from the media; those rare cases that are covered are the most atypical cases. One result is that false conceptions of “ordinary” are gained from “extraordinary” cases. Think of the O.J. Simpson case, which led Americans to think the court system is slow, inefficient, and more interested in the “rights of criminals” than the “rights of victims.” Never mind the fact that more than 90% of accused felons do not receive trials because of the fast and efficient practice of plea-bargaining, generated by a huge caseload and insufficient resources (Robinson, 2002a).

According to Haltom (1998: 157) media coverage of crimes in the America’s courts “tends to emphasize ‘crime control’ values” such as assuring “security from wrongdoers, just deserts, and punishment” while simultaneously devaluing due process concerns such as Constitutional protections of the accused. Haltom maintains that only in celebrated cases (such as the O.J. Simpson trial) do the media highlight due process values. These celebrated cases are more likely than the typical case to result in acquittals, thereby producing cynicism in Americans about the courts and the criminal justice system.

Mainstream media are very unlikely to discuss acts of deviance committed by major corporations who own the outlets and those that are like them (such as McDonalds and Disney). For example, consumers do not see the reality of McDonald’s and Disney; we do not learn of the tremendous harms caused by our fast food nation (Schlosser, 2001) or how the image of Disney

employees is manufactured and controlled in line with corporate interests (Bryman, 1999b). Exploitation of workers and harms caused by eating poor diets of fast food are not seen in mainstream media institutions.

America's police and courts are focused squarely on the acts that are viewed as most serious because of their supposed harmfulness and frequency of occurrence (Robinson, 2002a) – the acts that receive most priority for police arrest and criminal conviction in the courts are those that are defined as “serious” by the criminal law (these are the same acts focused on by the media). Yet, the evidence is very clear that these acts of “serious” crimes are actually far less serious than white-collar and corporate crime, because they cause less damage and occur less frequently (Reiman, 1998; Rosoff, Pontell, and Tillman, 2001; Simon and Hagan, 1999). Yet, our prisons have filled up with these people, making the United States the world's leader in incarceration (Robinson, 2002a). It is the existence of the dominant crime *theme* that accounts for this condition. This serves as evidence of the Disneyization of American criminal justice.

Dedifferentiation of Consumption and Merchandising

Theming in the media about crime results in fear among certain groups (Chiricos, Eschholtz, and Gertz, 1997; Eschholtz, 1997), and wide exposure to television and other media forms can “dull the critical-thinking ability” of Americans and lead to apathy (Harrigan, 2000: 131). This makes simplistic solutions to complex problems more appealing and creates disinterest in other important issues among Americans. While Disney uses theming to package images to attract people and sell products, the media rely on police and politicians to construct themes of crime and criminal justice that sell *more* of the same criminal justice to tax payers – it reinforces the status quo (Beckett, 1999; Gest, 2001). Promising alternatives to our rough and tough criminal justice systems are virtually ignored by mainstream media.

Ironically, theming by the Disney Corporation and theming of crime and criminal justice in the media both promote so-called “family values” and a certain moral order (Ritzer, 2000) even though each acts in ways that end up interfering with the strength and stability of the family. One striking example in criminal justice is the loss of eligible males to date in African American inner-city populations because of involvement in the criminal justice system (Robinson, 2002a).

So, it is now well established that there is a dominant crime-theme in the United States, one that appears across the country in our mainstream media. Because of the way the media cover crime stories, crime seems to be everywhere, seems to be out of control, seems to be likely to effect us all (Robinson, 2002b), even when street crime is actually decreasing. Criminal justice facilities are everywhere, as well, especially as more and more prisons are built across the country (Irwin and Austin, 1997). Schlosser (2001) demonstrates how fast-food restaurants have spread across the nation like wildfire. I would suggest that criminal justice growth and media coverage of crime are as responsible for the homogenization of our nation's cities as the spread of fast food restaurants. It seems like no matter where you go, the same restaurants are there and crime is a major problem causing fear in the local inhabitants.

Because images of crime and criminal justice tend to be created by the corporate giants who have control over mainstream media outlets (Bagdikian, 2000), we should expect them to

generate images that serve their own interests. Generally speaking, corporations have the same interests as the fast food and theme park industries: to attract customers and make profits. This takes at least two forms: first, it tricks consumers into buying more criminal justice (*dedifferentiation of consumption*); and second, it allows certain interests to make money off of crime and criminal justice (*merchandising*). Media images of criminal justice tend to produce loyalty to the status quo (Potter and Kappeler, 1998), just as restaurants and theme parks aim to encourage brand loyalty in their customers. Currently, in the wake of terrorist attacks on America that killed hundreds of police officers and firefighters, the status of the police officer and firefighter has been elevated to the status of hero (which is certainly a welcome change). One irony is that the demand for any product on which their logos appear is so high that counterfeiters are now illegally benefitting from the manufacture and sale of the September 11th tragedy. Another irony is that legitimate concerns related to police brutality, corruption, and other related issues are being muted in order to maintain the illusion of unity among all Americans. One example is that at the most recent meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS, March 2002), only 23 out of 140 papers on policing (16%) and of 705 papers total (3%) dealt with topics such as corruption, inappropriate use of force, profiling of minorities, and similar topics (Robinson, 2002a). This is hard to believe given the recent Rampart Corruption scandal in Los Angeles, the Houston Police Department drug scandal, and similar incidents across the country's largest cities.

Restaurant and theme parks are in the business not necessarily to produce high quality products, but rather to make money. Similarly, American criminal justice has become increasingly aimed at serving limited financial interests (Reiman, 1998). For example, companies such as the Corrections Corporation of America, Cornell Corrections, Correctional Services Corporation, and Wackenhut Corrections Corporation now run their own correctional facilities for profit. These corporations run prisons that increased their inmate populations 2,000 percent (2000%) from 1987 to 1996 by using organized lobbying techniques to influence state legislators (Sarabi and Bender, 2000). Once businesses have vested interests in making profits on crime control, it is logical that business-friendly government will do whatever it takes to assure a steady supply of offenders, so that the criminal justice system can continue to pay off (Christie, 2000). Perhaps this is why correctional officer hiring and training has become the "fastest-growing function" of government (Lilly and Knepper, 1993: 155). Kappeler et al. (2000: 45) write that enormous sums of money and millions of jobs are created by criminal justice, including about \$65 billion by private security alone.

Television and print executives aim to sell their product – whether it is entertainment or information – to consumers. Advertising in the media allows corporations to sell their products through entertainment (e.g., commercials), and through information (e.g., print ads). This is a form of *merchandising*. While theme parks such as Disney license and sell their images on just about everything, the criminal justice system is not in the business of selling goods and services directly to consumers through advertising. Instead, the system benefits from the selling of crime to consumers and the selling of criminal justice through particular images created in its programs. Consequently, consumers are unable to see criminal justice as a business that benefits limited financial and moral interests (Christie, 2000; Reiman, 1998). Others end up supporting more criminal justice merely for the jobs that are provided when new prisons are built in their neighborhoods. This is a form of *dedifferentiation of consumption*, whereby consumers become more interested in economic concerns than concerns about doing justice and reducing crime.

Politicians are now touting prison labor as a way to compete with imports from countries where labor costs are very low (Pigeon and Wray, 2000). Even though about 75,000 prisoners now produce goods for use in the public sector and another 2,500 work for the private sector, most inmates working in our nation's prisons (about 600,000) work to reduce costs of their imprisonment (Freeman, 1999). Nevertheless, confusion clearly exists in consumers and politicians about the purposes of confinement, even with popular television shows about prisons on numerous channels.

Although crime and criminal justice have always been attractive to viewers, only recently have crime shows become the most watched programs on television, crime novels become among the best selling books in the nation, and crime has been used to sell products to consumers. It is only in the past ten years, with the birth of television shows such as *COPS*, *America's Most Wanted*, and *Unsolved Mysteries*, that crime shows became cash cows for networks. The popularity of contemporary television shows such as *Law and Order* (which has actually spun off into 3 different shows), *CSI (Crime Scene Investigation)*, *Homicide*, *NYPD Blue*, *The Sopranos*, *Crossing Jordan* (about a crime fighting medical examiner), *The Court* and *First Monday* (both about the U.S. Supreme Court), *The District* (about the Washington D.C. police department), and so on, proves that viewers tune into broadcasts dealing with crime and criminal justice. These shows, which achieve high ratings for major television networks, allow advertisers unfettered access to consumers. The goal of the advertisers is to sell as many products as possible to people who are seeking a better quality of life (Galenano, 1996). Ironically, the more viewers are exposed to television, the more likely they are to see the world as a "mean and scary place," meaning the more they are likely to fear crime and support tougher criminal justice approaches (Robinson, 2002a).

Virtually all of this crime and criminal justice commercialism is based on illusion rather than fact (Kappeler et al., 2000), just as commercials for fast food and theme parks offer distorted pictures of reality (Schlosser, 2001). In the case of crime and criminal justice, media images tend to emphasize the most bizarre and violent crimes and give far more attention to law enforcement and corrections than to courts (Robinson, 2002a). Crime and criminal justice commercialism diverts our attention from larger and more important harms (Chermak, 1995), particularly acts of violent corporate crime (Simon and Hagan, 1999). Similarly, commercials for fast food and theme parks never mention the harms associated with the production of their products, including workplace injuries and deaths, the exploitation of cheap labor, promoting unhealthy eating habits, spreading disease, and destruction of the natural environment (Schlosser, 2001). Recent editions of the television show, *Frontline*, produced by the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), discussed harms produced by big tobacco corporations and by American meat companies. Such cases are not profiled by more mainstream television outlets such as ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and so forth (these outlets serve up what has been called McNews – see Ritzer, 2002 – they only discuss such cases when tobacco corporations or meat packing corporations are sued in civil court).

The only publicly discussed solutions for crime problems tend to sound easy and prepackaged (Krajicek, 1998), perfect for the fast food audience. The fast food industry has perfected the quick, low quality meal, available with little thought and effort. Similarly, politicians offer little more than sound bytes when discussing issues of crime and criminal

justice. This is true for both major political parties. For example, Platt (2001) uses direct quotes from the Democratic and Republican Conventions to show how each party tries to “out tough” the other in criminal justice policymaking. This is related to Disneyization, as well, because Disney creates a world where a family can escape to and find everything it needs to complete its fantasy vacation. In other words, Disneyization is as much about offering quick, easy solutions to complex problems as is McDonaldization. My supposition is that as Americans come to expect quick, easy solutions to food (McDonaldization), entertainment (Disneyization), and even shopping (what might be called WalMartization?), this likely affects their expectations for achieving other goals as well, including the reduction of crime. So, in essence, the successful intrusion by Disney, McDonalds, WalMart, and other similar institutions now greatly affects expectations of Americans for crime reduction and justice.

Emotional Labor

The final element of Disneyization is *emotional labor*, which is the use of coercion to force employees to behave in a given way. In the Disney theme parks, there is a mandated image and set of behaviors for employees, one of cleanliness, friendliness, and helpfulness. This is also true of McDonaldized systems – so there is a specific set of qualities for fast food employees.

The importance of emotional labor is seen in criminal justice in perhaps one way – the move to community policing witnessed over the past two to three decades. Community policing can be understood as a crime prevention partnership between the police and the community (Wroblewski and Hess, 2000). Although the term has no clearly defined set of characteristics in practice, in philosophy it is aimed at solving problems before they become crimes rather than merely reacting to crimes after they occur. That is, it is an approach aimed at identifying problems with the community before they lead to crime (Goldstein, 1990).

Community policing is rooted in a problem-solving approach but is not the same as problem-solving policing. Most scholars consider community policing to be a *philosophy* or *management style* toward policing rather than an actual set of strategies to reduce crime. It involves some form of community partnership aimed at addressing factors that produce crime, fear of crime, and problems unique to the community. Problem-oriented policing, often seen as an element of community policing, is practiced in line with the SARA model (scanning, analysis, response, and assessment). Problem-oriented policing begins with scanning or efforts to discover problems (often crime-related) in the community by officers and/or the community. After a problem is discovered, an analysis of the problem is conducted in order to understand its etiology. Then, a reasoned, planned response is initiated and ultimately evaluated in order to see if it is successful. . If not, more analysis occurs and a new response is designed and implemented.

Community policing grew out of the realization that professional policing did not effectively reduce crime and was not satisfying to certain segments of the population (Wroblewski and Hess, 2000). From roughly 1920 to 1970, American policing was more professional in nature, meaning it placed a high value on efficiency and crime fighting while being separate and distinct from public influence. Community policing instead places more emphasis on providing services to the community and increasing police-community relations (Gaines, Kaune, and Miller, 2000: 178) in part because of the realization that the success of formal social control

depends, at least partially, on informal social controls in a community.

The philosophy of community service is a form of emotional labor because it requires officers to behave in a certain way, to maintain a certain image, one that is friendly and helpful. Unfortunately, this image is only maintained in certain neighborhoods and in interactions with some segments of the population. In the nation's inner cities, zero tolerance policing is militaristic and brutal, and results in differential use of force against the nation's poor and people of color (Robinson, 2002a).

According to the National Criminal Justice Commission, community policing is based on the notion that police "should *serve* residents in a neighborhood rather than simply *police* them" (Donziger, 1996: 160). Yet, one significant problem with community policing is that many minority communities "feel both *overpoliced and underprotected* – overpoliced because the drug trade flourishes with the same vitality as before, and underprotected because police are often slow to respond to 911 calls from minority neighborhoods."

Legislators have voted to place more police in these neighborhoods, based on the belief that there is more crime there and that more police will reduce crime, even though the scientific evidence suggests otherwise (Kelling et al. 1974; Police Foundation, 1981). This is why the National Criminal Justice Commission concludes that "we need to learn how to police *better* before we add new police" (Donziger, 1996: 160, emphasis added). Better policing may in fact reduce crime. Less than 5% of officers nationwide are assigned to crime prevention efforts (Bayley, 1994); smart community policing would invest more resources toward problem solving approaches that are proactive rather than reactive.

Some police officers have rebelled against the idea of community policing, having come to the profession with the expectation of being law enforcement officers instead of spending most of their time providing services to the community (Wroblewski and Hess, 2000). In order to be a community police officer, however, police are forced to behave in line with the mandate of the Law Enforcement Code of Conduct, passed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). Much criminal justice work is still dehumanizing, but the move to community policing, where police spend more time providing social services and customer services in a friendly and helpful way, changes the image of police to be more consistent with a fast, friendly, entertaining workforce. The fact that it is forced is what makes it consistent with emotional labor of Disneyization.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper specified relationships between the trend of Disneyization and America's criminal justice systems. Disneyization is the process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world. This paper illustrated how the elements of theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, merchandising, and emotional labor have come to typify criminal justice operations in the United States.

From the analysis presented, it is clear that our systems of police, courts, and corrections can be described as Disneyized, but to a degree less than they have been McDonaldized

(Robinson, 2002b). America's criminal justice system does rely on theming, dedifferentiation of consumption, and merchandising. To a lesser degree, the element of emotional labor is present, as it seems to characterize the move to community policing. To the degree that community policing is coercive and forces police employees to behave in a given way that they would not normally behave, we can say that recent changes to American policing are consistent with Disneyization.

The analysis showed that *theming* of crime and criminal justice is widespread in the nation's mass media outlets. This theming, controlled by wealthy corporate interests, has great effects on American perceptions of crime, criminals, and the criminal justice system. I suggested that theming tricks consumers into buying more criminal justice, a form of *dedifferentiation of consumption*. It also allows certain interests to make money off of crime and criminal justice, a form of *merchandising*. Specifically, it was shown that media coverage of crime and criminal justice is supportive of more of the same, the status quo – more police, more courts, longer sentences, more prisoners, and so forth – all of which benefits large corporations and their employees.

Media coverage of crime and criminal justice also reinforces the validity of the criminal law, thereby encouraging police to continue to arrest street criminals, courts to convict them, and correctional facilities to punish them. That these acts of street crime are actually less harmful and occur less frequently than acts of corporate and white-collar crime is not relevant to the Disneyized criminal justice system. As others have suggested, America's systems of criminal justice may be about much more than just reducing crime and doing justice. They may, as part of a larger social process of Disneyization, be aimed at maintaining the image of crime as a street level phenomenon (*theming*), maintaining power by tricking consumers into buying more of the same (*dedifferentiation of consumption*), and actually making money off of crime (*merchandising*).

Others have suggested that American criminal justice policy is not evidence driven (Walsh and Harris, 1999) but is instead directed by misinformed, partisan politicians (Houston, 2001; Houston and Parsons, 1998) whose goals may not be to implement policies that will work (Sherman et al., 1997). Their goals may instead be to create policies that will get them elected and re-elected (Robinson, 2002a). To the degree that this is true, American criminal justice policy is not necessarily aimed at achieving justice and reducing crime, but instead may serve the functions of controlling certain segments of the population and serving limited financial interests (Reiman, 1998). The interests served by criminal justice operations include wealthy corporations who benefit from the expansion of criminal justice. This increases the believability of the Disneyization of America's criminal justice system.

ENDNOTE

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